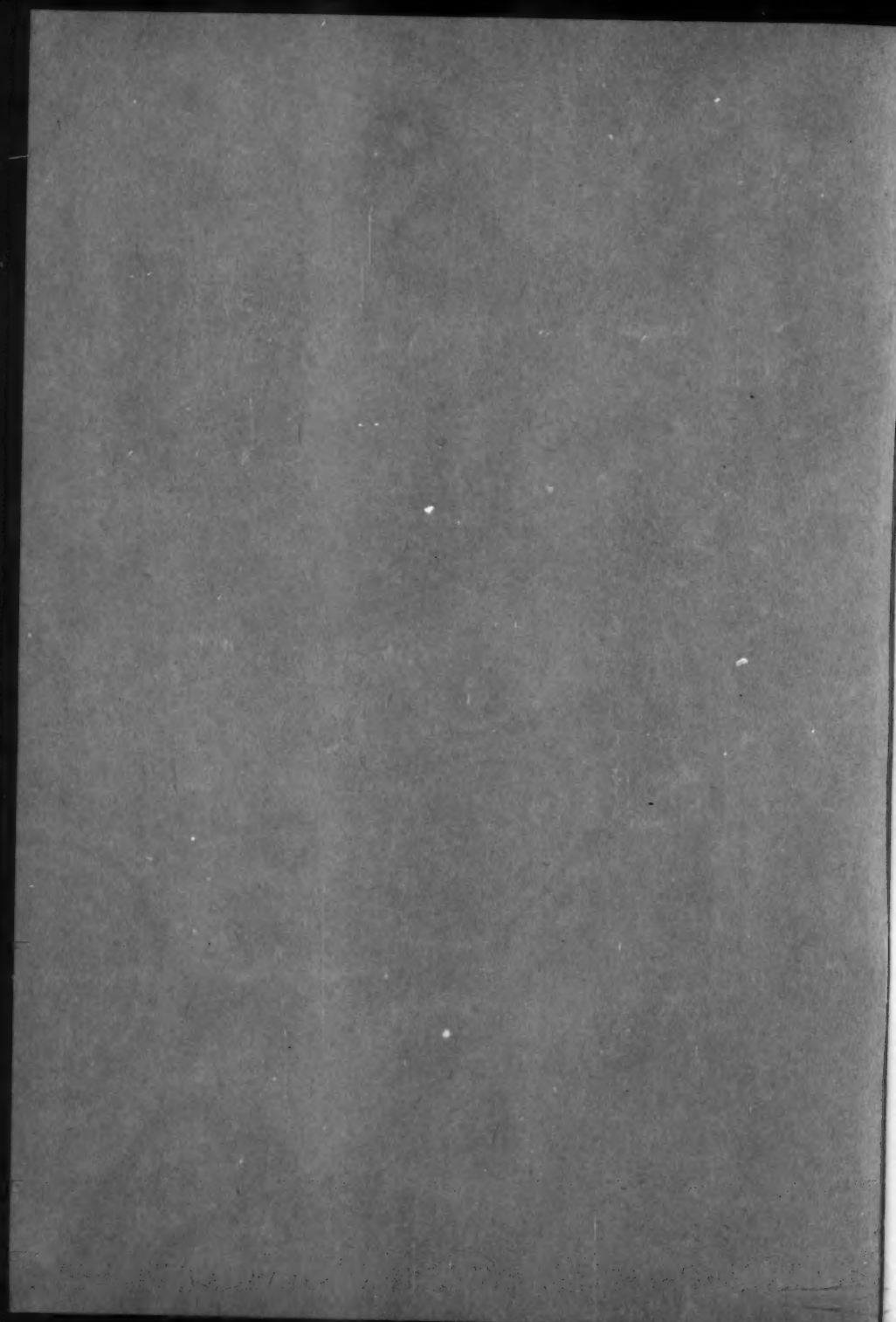


PRIMITIVE MAN

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SPLIT DISTRIBUTION METHODOLOGY

JOHN M. COOPER *

The present paper is an attempt, first and mainly, to formulate the possibilities and limitations of the technique for inferring the age of cultural phenomena occurring spatially in split distribution, and, second and incidentally, to clear up some current misconceptions regarding the technique. The writer presented several years ago some of the more significant evidence for the validity of the method as applied to the marginal peoples of the world,¹ but neither he, nor to his knowledge any of his colleagues, has taken time out to formulate fully and precisely the possibilities and limitations of the method. Meanwhile, in part as a result of

* Dr. Cooper, Professor of Anthropology, Catholic University of America, had partially revised this paper before his sudden death in May, 1949. The section on negative split distribution was however in rough draft only and incomplete. The examples to illustrate this section, which he had indicated briefly on the margins of the manuscript, are given as footnotes 6-9 inclusive. Otherwise the paper is presented just as he had left it. We feel that it is most appropriate that it be published in the journal which he founded and to which he has made so many other scientific contributions. [Regina Flannery.]

¹ Temporal Sequence and the Marginal Cultures, Catholic Univ. of Amer. Anthropol. Ser. No. 10, Wash., 1941, pp. 9-43.

this neglect, certain misconceptions have crept in regarding the split distribution technique. It, for instance, has been classified explicitly or implicitly as merely another form of the classic age-area hypothesis: the wider the distribution, the older is the phenomenon; phenomena found on the margins of the total distribution are older, those found at the focus thereof more recent; the region of greatest development is the region of origin. In reality the split distribution method of reconstruction is utterly different from the age-area and rests on totally different evidence. Other misconceptions will be touched on as we go along.

The formulation here offered was worked out in large part during two or three weeks of a graduate seminar conducted by the writer at the University of New Mexico in the first semester of 1948-1949. The participating members of the seminar were: José Rafael Arboleda, John M. Biggins, William Cahill, Walter D. Enger, Jr., Garland J. Marrs, Thomas Matthews, Harvey C. Moore, Harry Naylor, Constance Sears, and Morton Sloane. The writer first outlined the problem and submitted a brief preliminary formulation as a working basis. Discussions followed. Then each member of the seminar independently wrote out and presented to the group his or her own formulation, and each formulation was discussed. The formulations and the discussions thereof were then synthesized by the writer in a final joint formulation of which the present paper is in large measure an expansion. In the seminar we confined attention to positive split distributions; the sections on negative split distributions in the present paper have been added by the writer.

We are not using the term split distribution as synonymous with discontinuous distribution. Discontinuous distribution, as currently defined, is the occurrence of a given cultural phenomenon—element, trait, complex, pattern, theme, configuration or whatever else it may be or be called—in two or more spatially separated regions, the said phenomenon being absent from the intervening region or regions. Such a distribution may, of course, be due either to diffusion from a single historical source or to independent invention or convergence. The term split distribution is used in

the present paper to denote exclusively such discontinuous distribution as is due to diffusion or transference from a common [unitary] historical source.

Split distributions may be either positive or negative: positive, that is, where a given cultural phenomenon is found present in the two or more regions concerned; negative, that is, where it is absent therefrom. The absence of a given phenomenon from a culture is just as truly a characteristic of a culture as is the presence of it therein. The absence, for example, of septum perforation from most of Occidental culture is just as truly a characteristic thereof as is the presence of ear-lobe perforation; the absence of wheat-growing from aboriginal New World culture just as truly a characteristic thereof as the presence of maize growing; absence of duel of honor and slavery in the U. S. A. today just as truly characteristic thereof as the presence of both was characteristic thereof in the early nineteenth century. And under certain conditions, to be defined *infra*, such absences may be highly diagnostic, and, we believe, highly significant for inference of age.

Criteria for determining whether any given case of discontinuous distribution is one of split distribution or of independent invention have been fairly well, although not exhaustively, worked out, at least as regards positive split distribution. The formulation of such criteria is not our problem in the present paper. Our problem is instead: In given cases where there is substantial probable-to-clear evidence of positive or negative split distribution, in the sense above defined, what can and cannot be inferred as to the age of the phenomena concerned?

Inasmuch, however, as there appears to be some confusion in our anthropological literature between these two quite distinct problems, it may help clarify the issue if, before attacking the problem with which the present paper is primarily concerned, namely, that of inferring age from split distribution, we review rapidly the criteria for distinguishing split distribution from other forms of discontinuous distribution, that is, from those due to independent invention or convergence.

CRITERIA FOR SPLIT DISTRIBUTION

A. *Positive split distribution.* The basic criterion is specificity. The phenomena should be specific, diagnostic: e.g., scapulimancy present in northern North America and northern Asia, and absent around the Bering Strait; crescent-shaped hamstringing instrument present in South America and the Iberian Peninsula; pop-sicles in New York and in Otavalo, Ecuador (even though we did not know from documentary evidence that the concession for these avants couriers of civilization was graciously granted in 1947 or 1948); zippers in the United States and in scattered distribution elsewhere in present-day world. Where the phenomena are too generic, especially where widely differing phenomena are bracketed together under vague rubrics or mere catchwords, no case for split distribution can be made. Such, for example, would be most of the miscellaneous widely spread food and work taboos for the father, which are often dubbed "couvade," as distinct from the relatively rare occurrence of specific simulation by the father of lying-in pains and observances. "Totemism" would be another good example. If a number of specific phenomena are found clustered in two or more discontinuous regions, as, e.g., the group of specific folklore themes in the Chaco and in North America, the case for split distribution is strengthened, but the fundamental criterion is always that of specificity, not that of number; of form, in Graebner's terminology not that of quantity.² A single phenomenon, if specific enough, may be probable-to-clear evidence of split distribution, as in the cases of scapulimancy, pop-sicles and zippers above cited.³ Clustering of such phenomena in given discontinuous areas affords only corroborative evidence.

² No one can reasonably quarrel with the logic of the Kulturkreis' criteria of form and quantity. Our quarrel is rather with what we consider the incautious use and application of these criteria.

³ Wilson D. Wallis ("Inference of Relative Age of Culture Traits from Magnitude of Distribution," in *Southwestern Jour. of Anthropol.* 1:142-59, 1945) seems to imply (p. 154) that number is imperative. Our pop-sicles and zippers, and hundreds of other examples that could easily be adduced, are, it seems to me, clear evidence to the contrary, as, I am sure, he would agree.

The criterion of specificity is the basic evidential one; that of number is secondary, corroborative only.

Phenomena found in discontinuous distribution may be fairly to markedly specific, yet, for one or more of the following reasons, not acceptable as evidencing common [unitary] origin.

First, they may be due to sheer "chance" or convergence. Classic examples are the zero and pyramidal megalithic structures in the Old and New World, the fire piston in Indonesia and early nineteenth century Europe. Another example would be the suspension of horse hides near graves of men as found among some of the equestrian peoples of Eurasia and among the 19th century Araucanians.

Second, they may be due to the operation of the "law of limited possibilities,"—bowstrings are derived from either floral or faunal sources.

Third, they may be due to what may be called cultural proliferation, under which, in one or both of two discontinuous areas, the changes are all but exhaustively rung on a given cultural theme. Scalping in the Chaco and in North America may be instanced. In one or other part of South America pretty nearly everything that can be done to heads of enemies killed in war is or was done. The whole head as such is kept; the internal soft tissues are removed; both the bony and internal soft tissues are taken out leaving only the shrunken external tissues and hair; both internal and external soft tissues are removed leaving only the bare skull; and so forth. It is not then surprising, nor seemingly significant of split distribution, that the preservation of the scalp alone occurs, as it does in the Chaco.

Fourth, they may be due to conditioning by similar ecology, similar basic *Wirtschaft* or subsistence quest, or similar materials used in manufactures. Examples of such conditioning by similar ecology would be: terrace horticulture in various discontinuous mountainous regions of the world, or irrigation in regions of low precipitation; cruder types of snowshoes in North America and among the Ona and Pehuenche of South America; plank houses among the southern Araucanians of Chile and on the Northwest Coast of North America; family hunting ground systems of land

tenure among the Ona and earlier Tehuelche and among the northeastern Algonquians.⁴ Examples of such conditioning by similar basic *Wirtschaft* or subsistence quest, itself largely conditioned by ecology, would be the use of skin garments and skin-covered shelters among hunting peoples of North America and of the region from the Chaco and Pampa to Cape Horn in South America. Examples of such conditioning by material used in manufactures would be the chipping technique for making stone implements or mold casting of metals in the Old and New World.

Fifth, they may be due to the rarity or to the striking or strange nature or appearance of objects or events. Examples would be the magico-religious use of bezoars in the Old World and in both far South and far North America, or special beliefs and observances regarding twins, eclipses, earthquakes, and so forth.

Sixth, they may be due to earlier diffusion out into discontinuous marginal areas from the common culture of the intervening area, with subsequent disappearance from the latter area.

⁴ Julian Steward states ("American Culture History in the Light of South America," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropol.* 1947, 3:93, footnote 8): "I see the Fuegian patrilineal band hunting territory and the Algonkian family trapping territory, as very different ecological adaptations, whereas Cooper seems to consider them the same thing and to derive them from nistorical tradition through a split-distribution method. He does not take into account the co-existence of two types of land-tenure among the Algonkians, each related to a special economic activity." In the paper to which he refers I, on the contrary, specifically attribute the Algonkian family trapping territory to "local and more recent origin" in northeastern North America, this on specifically ecological grounds, and with specific emphasis on the differing types—there are three, not two—of land tenure among the northeastern Algonquians. In 1939 ("Is the Algonkian Family Hunting Ground System Pre-Columbian?" in *American Anthropologist*, 41:66-90) I had tentatively put forth the suggestion that the Fuegian and Algonkian might possibly be tarriant phenomena, but in two papers published in 1942 ("Areal and Temporal Aspects of Aboriginal South American Cultures," in *Primitive Man*, 15:1-38; and "South American Marginal Cultures," in *Proc. Eighth Amer. Scientific Congress*, vol. 2, pp. 147-60) both known to and cited by Steward (l. c. p. 90, footnote 4), I expressly excluded Fuegian and Algonkian hunting territories as tarriant phenomena.

Perhaps the maize husking pin of the Chaco and of eastern North America is in this category.

Seventh, they may be due to diffusion from a third quite alien intrusive culture, such as our own European. Full-length women's skirts among the present-day Seminole and Pueblo Indians are an historical example.

Eighth, judgment of course has to be suspended where our knowledge of the intervening cultures is too imperfect or too fragmentary. Twitch omens, for instance, or the belief that conception cannot occur from a single act of coitus, are reported in discontinuous distribution in various regions of both the Old and the New World. But our information on the intervening areas, although it has recently accumulated rapidly and markedly, is still very slight. We have insufficient grounds for deciding whether or not our scattered records are reliable samplings. These records certainly raise a question; but they do not as yet answer it.

To make a case for split distribution there must be probable-to-clear evidence that, first, the foregoing indications for independent invention are absent, and that, second, the phenomenon occurring in discontinuous distribution is sufficiently specific or diagnostic.

Judging whether or not a given phenomenon is actually specific enough or diagnostic no doubt involves something of the subjective. In some cases, the specificity, while present, is too low to justify inference of common [unitary] origin. The hazard of subjectivism is too great. The only thing to do is to suspend judgment. An example would be the weeping salutation among certain peoples of the Chaco and eastern Brazil, the Ecuadorean Montaña, the Andaman Islands, Australia and New Zealand. On the other hand, in many cases specificity is so marked that the hazard of subjectivism is negligible. For instance, there can be little question that the scapulimancy of northern North America and northern Asia harks back to a unitary source, in spite of the break in its distribution in Alaska and at the Bering Strait bridgehead, or that the clusters of games and folklore motifs found in the Chaco and in North America came from some

common historical source or sources. Or again, if we knew nothing of the invention and historical distribution of popsicles or zippers, yet found them discontinuously distributed, we could reasonably infer split distribution.

An objective criterion that can in many cases be applied is that of limited distribution. Among the many types of deadfalls, for example, few seem "simpler" and less diagnostic than the samson-post deadfall, which occurs in discontinuous distribution in northern North America and among the Samoyeds and Finno-Ugrians. But it has not been recorded to our knowledge anywhere else in the world, and our knowledge of deadfall types and their distribution is fairly comprehensive. If this particular deadfall were so "simple," then we should expect it to have a random or sporadic distribution over the many and vast areas of the Old and New World where deadfalls occur. But we actually find it occurring in only two of these areas. It apparently is not so "simple" after all. By the objective criterion of limited distribution it can well be called "diagnostic" of split distribution.

As previously noted, an inference of split distribution is corroborated if in the discontinuous areas or cultures there be not merely a single specific common phenomenon but a number of them.

But it may be emphasized that form alone may give sufficient ground for such inference, even though function be different: for instance, Standard Oil cans used in occidental culture for shipping liquid fuel and in non-occidental cultures for holding water or for cooking; or coins from one area used in a distant one as personal adornment; or small hand mirrors or bits of shiny tin from a tomato can used for srying. Finally, while inference of split distribution may often be made from similarity of form alone, the inference is confirmed if function also is identical; for instance, the rather specific type of hand drum used by Araucanians and by some Siberians in shamanistic rites.

B. *Negative split distribution.* By negative *discontinuous* distribution we mean the absence of a given cultural phenomenon in two or more spatially separated regions, the said phenomenon being universally or generally present in the intervening region

or regions. Examples would be: horticulture and alcoholic beverages absent from aboriginal far northern North America and far southern South America, or headhunting and animal blood sacrifices absent from most of the Eta of the Philippines and from the Punan of Borneo, but in all four cases present generally among the intervening peoples. By negative split distribution we mean such negative discontinuous distribution as is due to tarriance from an earlier common [unitary] culture, common [unitary] in so far at least as it lacked the phenomenon in question.

Our problem is: where we find negative discontinuous distribution, what criteria have we for inferring, from such distribution alone or from such distribution plus other evidence, that the absence of the cultural phenomenon is or is not a case of split distribution? What criteria, for instance, can help us decide whether the Indians of the far northern and far southern American continent lack horticulture because they had common cultural apcestors who lacked it or because the lack is due to some other factor or factors?

This problem has been given relatively little attention, as compared with that of positive split distribution. The following summary represents the present writer's thinking, such as it is and as far as it has gotten.

Where a given phenomenon, absent from two discontinuous areas, is universally or generally present throughout the intervening area we may hypothesize⁵ negative split distribution.

The hypothesis is of course invalidated if there be evidence that one or both of the discontinuous cultures formerly had the phenomenon in question but later lost it. Pottery, lacking as a lost art among many Indonesian marginal peoples and most of Polynesia, may be instanced.

⁵ A query in passing. Can any anthropologist tell us whether the delightful malapropism "hypotheate" for "hypothesize," which is increasingly appearing in discontinuous distribution in some of our recent anthropological and other social science literature, is a case of split distribution or of independent invention? An equally delightful one is "Immaculate Conception" for "Virgin Birth."

The hypothesis is corroborated if there be a number of negative phenomena clustered in the two or more discontinuous areas, for the probabilities of mere "chance" convergence are lessened.⁶

The hypothesis is corroborated if the positive distribution in the intervening area is an orderly and complex one and correlates neatly with other phenomena therein.⁷

The hypothesis is corroborated if there be reasonable grounds for inferring that the factors conditioning the presence of the phenomenon in the intervening area were lacking among the cultural ancestors of the discontinuously distributed peoples.⁸

The hypothesis is corroborated by archeological evidence (or of course documented historical evidence) from either the intervening or the discontinuous area or from both.⁹

The hypothesis may be corroborated in occasional cases by somatological evidence.

INFERRING TEMPORAL DEPTH

Let us turn now to the problem of inferring age. We are assuming that, in the given case, split distribution, established probably or unmistakably by the criteria above discussed, is present: viz., that the parallels or resemblances are due to unitary origin and diffusion, not to independent invention and convergence. To simplify theoretic discussion we are using the case of a single trait found in just two discontinuous areas. The problem then is: Given such a split distribution of a single trait found in two discontinuous areas, how can we compute the length of time, in

⁶ See, for example, Steward's use of this principle in his "American Culture History in the Light of South America," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropol.*, 1947, 3:85-107.

⁷ See, for example, the positive orderly distribution of traits in the Indonesian area which are consistently absent from most or all of the marginals in the area, in Cooper, *Temporal Sequence and the Marginal Cultures*, p. 15.

⁸ For example, domesticated animals, the factor conditioning the presence of animal blood-sacrifice, are lacking from among the marginals and reasonably inferred to be lacking among their cultural ancestors.

⁹ For example, the evidence for horticulture in America.

absolute or relative chronology, that has elapsed since the cultural split occurred?

In formulating the possibilities and limitations of inferring age from split distribution we shall discuss two aspects: A. What can be concluded from split distribution *alone*; B. What can be concluded from split distribution *plus* other evidence.

A. *Split distribution alone.* Provided the two areas or cultures in which the trait occurs have been isolated and out of contact since the split occurred (such isolation itself to be established by independent historical, archeological, geographical or other evidence), we *can* conclude that the trait must be as old as the time that has elapsed since the split occurred.

From such split distribution alone we *cannot* compute how long ago the split occurred: it may have occurred only a month or year or decade ago, or thousands of years ago, so far as split distribution alone reveals. Nor can we conclude that in an earlier period, at the time of the split or later, the trait existed over the whole intervening region between the two areas where it is at present found: it may have existed, or it may have been diffused along some narrow corridor connecting the two areas, or it may even have rapidly hurdled the intervening space, if carried rapidly over land or water by some individual or small group separating from the earlier focus of incidence through wanderlust, trade, captivity, etc.; split distribution as such does not reveal which of these three alternatives is true. We cannot conclude that the trait in question is necessarily older in ultimate origin than all other traits found in the intervening region: even where the culture of the intervening region is more advanced technologically, it may have retained certain very archaic traits that have been lost or replaced by more recent ones in the two geographically marginal cultures in which the split distribution occurs: e.g., chipped stone implements absent from Oceanic pygmies and bamboo used instead, versus presence of chipped stone among the intervening Malaysians. Finally, from split distribution alone, we cannot conclude whether the trait has diffused from area X in which it is at present found to area Y, or from area Y to area X, or from some earlier third area Z to both X and Y.

B. *Split distribution plus other evidence.* If we have evidence of (1) isolation of the two areas through intervening cultures developed in situ in the intervening region or intrusive therein, and (2) length of time during which the intervening cultures have occupied such intervening region, we can compute how long ago the split occurred, and hence how old the trait is, in relative chronology and even in some cases in absolute or something approaching absolute chronology.

The evidence for such length of time may be historical, archeological, ethnological, ecological, linguistic, somatological, geological,—especially historical and archeological,—or combinations of two or more or all of these. Examples: intrusions or development in situ of horticultural and higher cultures of North, Central and South America in the areas between the American marginal peoples; of the Eskimo at the Bering Strait bridgehead between the northern north American and northern Asiatic marginals; of the Tupi-speaking and other more advanced riverine tribes of the upper Amazon and Ucayali valley between the other less advanced Montaña peoples;¹⁰ of the Ur-Austronesians, "Malaysians," peoples from India, and others between the scattered Negritos of the Andamans, the Southeast Asiatic mainland, and the Philippine Islands.¹¹ It may be re-emphasized that the evidence for length of time elapsed since the split occurred, hence for age of the trait itself, is drawn in these and similar cases, not from split distribution alone but from split distribution viewed in the light of the age, computed on other, independent evidence, of the intervening (and isolating) cultures.

Some evidence of the age of traits found in split distribution in two areas may, in some cases, be derived from the following canons:

a. The greater the geographical distance and barriers between

¹⁰ Cf. G. Tessmann, *Die Indianer Nord-Ost Peru*, 1930.

¹¹ Cf. also Hornbostel and Herzog on split distribution of unusual musical styles as far apart as Fuegians, S. Californians and Yuma, Andaman Islanders, Vedda of Ceylon (E. M. von Hornbostel, "Fuegian Songs," in *American Anthropologist*, 1936, 38:357-67).

the two areas, the longer the time required for diffusion, and hence the older the trait,—and vice versa.

b. The greater the degree of integration into the culture of the respective areas, the older the trait,—and vice versa.

c. The greater the linguistic differentiation of the two cultures, the longer the time since the split,—and vice versa.

d. The greater the parallel cultural development of the two cultures since the split, the longer the time since then, and vice versa.

e. The greater the cultural resistance and the lesser the receptiveness of the donee culture (if known to be the donee and not the donor), the longer the time since last contact.

We may stress the point, however, that such evidence as is derived from these canons appears at best as contributory and auxiliary only. As to a, b, c, d, we have extremely meager data on the rate of speed of geographic diffusion, cultural integration, linguistic differentiation, and cultural development. Sometimes the speed is high, sometimes low—due to factors very little understood. Predictions as to rate of speed, or usable principles of inference thereupon, have extremely low dependability. As to e, again we have no very dependable measure of speed. Further, a culture known to be resistant or receptive today, may have been the reverse in the distant or even fairly recent past. Finally, we more commonly do not know which culture was the donor, or whether both have received from a third, perhaps extinct, culture. Here again, such evidence, even where present, is at best contributory.

CONCLUSION

So much for the method of split distribution—its possibilities and limitations. It has use, we believe. It has not Allmacht.

Its specific use is in measuring the age of traits that by the criterion of specificity are *diagnostic*. For measuring the age of *less specific* traits, complexes, patterns, and configurations, other methods must be utilized, those of negative correlation, of constant factors, of pegged or presupposed factors, of sporadic dis-

tribution and factors.¹² In cases where the split distribution method can be used in conjunction with these methods, it adds confirmatory weight to inferences made from them (e.g., the specific split distributions found in the Oceanic Negrito cultures versus the non-specific ones¹³). In general, fullest possible use should be made of *all* methods. Commonly they are mutually confirmatory.

¹² Cf. J. M. Cooper, Temporal Sequence and the Marginal Cultures, for negative correlation, pp. 14-19; constant factors, pp. 43-47; pegged or presupposed factors, pp. 47-51; sporadic distribution and factors, pp. 52-62.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.* pp. 40-41.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON LAMAISM AMONG THE ORDOS MONGOLS

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The steady colonization by the Chinese of the Ordos region beyond the Great Wall has been accelerated during the last fifty years. As a consequence, the lands which were formerly occupied by five of the seven Mongol tribes of the area,—Usjen, Wang, Tsjassack, Dalat, and Dsounger,—have been very largely converted from grazing to agriculture. Those of the Otok and Hanggin have been somewhat less affected due to the lack of water in the high plateaus which they claim. Nevertheless even in these marginal lands the pressure of the Chinese refugees driven to the north by the Communists has been felt for the past fifteen years.

The economic changes wrought by the increasing numbers of Chinese farmers and merchants in the area have been accompanied by an enormous growth of Lamaism among the Mongols. This form of Buddhism had been actively promoted in the area by the Chinese emperors who endowed the monasteries and who granted special privileges to the priesthood. An old map of the Ordos region shows, for instance, that a couple of centuries ago there were but thirty-one monasteries distributed among the seven tribes. Today there are about three hundred, and of these some one hundred and forty-three are sizeable establishments, to each of which is attached a considerable number of priests drawn from the Mongol population.

There are three kinds of monasteries in the Ordos country. The *tchoos*, or great lamaseries, are those which were subsidized by the Chinese emperors and occasionally might have among their inmates a *kegen* or living Buddha. In this latter case the monastery is further enriched by the offerings of the numerous pilgrims who come to get his blessing. There are nine of these large *tchoos* in the Ordos. Ordinarily about a hundred of the lamas belonging

to them are exempt from military service and the remainder have to enter service only in times of war. Next in order are the *sumes*, or smaller monasteries, dispersed throughout the country and dependent upon the ruler of the tribes in whose territory they are situated. These do not receive subsidies however but provide for themselves from alms given by the people. Finally there are the *kits* or shrines, each of which may have a few lamas attached, although some have none.

Each of the monasteries in the first two categories has its independent organization and property, including livestock. The *tsjorji* is the abbot or "boss." There is a *gebkuj* or prefect of discipline over the lamas, the *pandis* (disciples), *sabinars* (students). The lama who directs the prayers is the *undsat*. The one who takes care of the finances of the monastery is the *nirba*. The sacristan is the *takilci*. Those who bring tea to the lamas as they recite their prayers are *jama*, and finally there are the *dughanci* who see to the cleaning of the monasteries and the shrines.

While many of the lamaseries I have visited have several hundred members registered, usually about half are absent at any one time,—some visiting their families, others on pilgrimages which may last for years to Lhasa or other far-famed monasteries such as those of Lohorong, Kumbum or Ourga, still others on their missions as physicians.

Many Mongol men unhappily find themselves in the ranks of the Buddhist priesthood through no choice of their own,—they were dedicated to Buddha in infancy. Members are recruited oftentimes in the following way. A physician-lama is called in by a household wherein an infant is sick. The lama then states that he can cure the child only on the condition that he be promised to Buddha. Believing that they thus save their child's life, the parents comply. This means that the boy remains at home with his parents only until about the age of nine years, when he receives his red or yellow holy vestment from the lamas. He will then be removed from his home to one of the lamaseries and there presented to a teacher who instructs him in the Tibetan language of his prayerbook and who in turn is served by him.

First the novice is instructed to wash his head and hands for

some days with sacred water, then his teacher shaves his head as a sign that he is starting his job as a student. He remains in a small house or tent near his master, serving him by preparing meals, collecting cattle-dung for fuel, making tea, cleaning the house, taking care of the lama's horse and helping him in his religious office. Occasionally the master visits the young student to help him with his studies. The Mongol saying—"Religion cannot be learned without plenty of blows," is usually followed literally. If the student is clever enough and when he is considered well enough advanced in his knowledge of the Tibetan language,—sometimes only after many years,—he becomes a disciple, and takes vows of chastity. He is then prevented from killing any living thing—even his lice which he does not crush but merely throws away! As a final step he becomes a lama, a priest.

While not all doctors in the Ordos region are lamas, it is safe to say that all lamas are doctors of one kind or another. Some are not only well versed in their religion but have likewise had medical studies at the Ordos University of Nembarasjansume, about seventy miles north of Ningsia. There they learn the herbal lore which has been accumulating for centuries, and their remedies are truly effective in many sorts of illness.¹

On the other hand, however, a great number of lamas, even those of highest rank who are privileged to wear the red cloak over their full-dress yellow costume, claim ability to cure disease through exorcising evil spirits which are believed to have caused it. One such case which came to my attention will serve to illustrate the general procedure in exorcism, although details may differ in the practice of each lama.

A lama of great reputation who had been trained at Lhasa was called in to treat the wife of a Christian shepherd whom I knew. The woman, a nervous hysterical type in any case, had gone into convulsions after having dreamed of a coffin in the corner of her room. Various remedies were tried, but the woman did not respond and finally her husband sent for the famous lama. When

¹ Cf. F. G. Muller Reinhold, *Die Krankheits- und Heilgottheiten des Lamaismus*, *Anthropos*, 22:956-991, 1927.

he arrived he was received with all honors and given the best his host had to offer. Only in the evening did the lama enquire for the patient. He was told that she had been removed to a small house nearby on the opposite hill. The lama instructed the husband and his brother to bring the woman to him after having unrobed the upper part of her body. As the two men advanced supporting the quivering patient between them, the lama suddenly in a thundering voice ordered them to halt. He examined the woman and soon placed his hand beneath her breasts as he smilingly declared: "Here we have him. Here is the devil!" Then rapidly twirling so that his red cloak swirled about him as he moved a few paces away, quickly he grabbed a pistol from beneath his broad red sash and shot it in the air but toward the woman. She fell backward. The lama came forward and again examined her. Finally he told her husband: "The devil is gone. You can take your wife home."

In addition to the *herbalist* and those who drive out evil spirits, there are lamas, who like the *shamans* of Siberia are believed to have divinatory powers. These *gurdumba* are not particularly numerous among the Ordos and are always among the lowest-ranking members of the lama community. They are considered disreputable and are scoffed at by their colleagues. Nevertheless they are tolerated and even given some assistance because of the considerable profits they make for their communities. The people in general have great faith in them. Seemingly the incantations of the *gurdumba* take place on particular days or special periods of the year.

On the occasions when a *gurdumba* is to perform, a heavy iron helmet is brought into the temple. The lamas start their prayers as usual, each taking his accustomed seat. The *gurdumba* is among the other lamas but after some time he is shaken by heavy convulsions, sweats profusely and foams at the mouth. The expression on his face alternates between that of foolish laughter and of unendurable pain. Then two lamas lift up the heavy helmet and put it on the head of the *gurdumba*, whereupon the latter rises and in a frenzy begins to jump and leap around. It is at this point that questions are asked of him. He seems not to hear the

questions or notice the *hataks* (ceremonial scarfs) which the people throw toward him. Suddenly however he grasps a sword and with its point writes down on the ground the answers to the questions. He then whirls around and, while the lamas start to say the remainder of their prayers, he falls down unconscious. It is said that after a performance of this kind the shaman-lama suffers for quite a few days.

Occasionally the *gurdumba*, too, effects cures. Typical of the accounts of which one who travels with the Ordos Mongols hears many, is the following by a recent convert to Christianity. "A six-month-old baby suffered from a kind of convulsions, recurring daily at sunset. The mother took the small tot to a *gurdumba's* performance. The possessed one seized the baby by the legs, whirled it around in the air, blew upon it, and laid it down upon the stool where he had been sitting before. He then seated himself for quite a while upon the baby. Some people protested, fearing the lama would kill the child, but the elders made them keep silent. Then the magician wrote down some words in the sand, using the point of his sword: he rose, once again blew over the baby and then gave it back to its mother, not only unharmed but completely healed as was proved afterwards."

Once in a while when traveling through the Ordos steppes one may see old women between 60 and 80 years of age whose heads are shaved, who wear Buddhist amulets on their breasts and, as they watch the sheep or the small babies before the yurts, hold Buddhist rosaries in their hands,—the rosary composed of 108 beads. These old women are a kind of religious women-lama and are designated *chibagandei* by both the Mongols and the descendants of the old Nestorian Christians who still remain in the Southeastern part of the Usjen Banner.²

There is still talk too of the famous *dayancinar*; the lamas who live in constant meditation³ for months or even years enclosed

² Cf. A. Mostaert, *Ordosica*, Bulletin No. 9, The Catholic University of Peking, pp. 16-17, 1934.

³ Cf. Heiler, *Die buddhistische Versenkung*, München, 1918. p. 3, states: Buddhismus ist nicht wie viele Abendländer glauben selber Weltschmerz, wehmütiges Mitleid gegen alle Wesen und schmachtende Nirvanasehn-

in stone caverns in the mountains. Everyday the *pandis* bring them some food which they pass through a small opening in the wall of the cavern. Similar caverns in the hills near monasteries are pointed out, where the lamas go in the summertime to fast for 30 to 49 days.

sucht, sondern ein angespanntes Ringen nach dem Heil, nach der reinen Leidenschaftlosigkeit und der befreiten Erkenntnis, ein Ringen in unermüdlicher Selbstzucht und Selbstertötung, in angestrengter Meditation und Versenkung (Sven Hedin, Tafel, Leder, Consten, Huc et Gabet).

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